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Baltimore survives latest World Cup cut

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Ryan Sharrow](#) Staff

Baltimore will be one of 18 cities included in the U.S.'s bid package to host World Cup soccer games in 2018 or 2022.

The USA Bid Committee narrowed down the list of 27 remaining cities on Tuesday, with Baltimore making the latest cut. The news was met with a loud roar from a gathering of local leaders who met to hear the announcement at the ESPN Zone Inner Harbor.

"This is a great day for the city of Baltimore and the state of Maryland to be part of the U.S. bid," said Terry Hasseltine, director of Maryland's Sports Marketing Office. "This is more than just games. It's a 30-plus day event."

The USA Bid Committee will find out in December if it has been awarded the 2018 or 2022 games, which would generate an estimated \$5 billion in economic impact in the U.S. If selected, 12 cities will host soccer matches during the event, arguably the world's largest sports spectacle.

For Baltimore's tourism and sports business leaders, the decision capped months of campaigning. The 71,000-seat M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore, as well as FedEx Field in Landover, both made Tuesday's cut. The nearly year-long process down to 18 started with an original list of 70 cities.

The average stadium size of the 18 cities holds 78,000, adjusted for the World Cup.

Hasseltine said Baltimore's "logistics" — including transportation lines, hotels and restaurants, all within walking distance to M&T Bank Stadium — made the city's bid attractive to the decision committee. The city's environmental efforts also played a large role, he added.

Cities tapped for the event could host as many as six games. If Baltimore is chosen, Loyola University, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Towson University, Stevenson University, McDonogh School and Cedar Lane Park in Harford County would serve as practice facilities for several countries during the month-long event.

Mark Burdett, vice president of corporate sales and development for the **Baltimore Ravens**, said last summer's sold-out A.C. Milan/Chelsea soccer match at M&T Bank Stadium showed the city is soccer-hungry.

"The success we had last summer catapulted us into [soccer's] sphere and that allows us to do this," he said.

Burdett said M&T Bank Stadium's proximity to Landover and FedEx Field shouldn't impact the final cut to 12 cities. He said the short distance will allow teams to limit travel and train in the same region.

[Click here for the full list of 18 cities.](#)